

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application. Please amend the claims as follows:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently amended) A method for allocating loans among a plurality of lending entities comprising:
 - receiving information associated with a loan application;
 - determining whether each of a plurality of lending entities is eligible to fund the loan application;
 - prioritizing at least a portion of eligible lending entities according to at least one predetermined rule; [[and]]
 - determining a ranking of the prioritized eligible lending entities; and
 - selecting an eligible lending entity from the prioritized eligible lending entities, wherein the selected eligible lending entity is the lending entity with the highest ranking.
2. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the information associated with the loan application comprises a zip code.
3. (Original) The method of claim 2, wherein the operation of determining whether a lending entity is eligible to fund the loan application comprises determining whether the lending entity is eligible to fund a loan application associated with the zip code.
4. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the information associated with the loan application comprises a loan amount.
5. (Original) The method of claim 4, wherein the operation of determining whether a lending entity is eligible to fund the loan application comprises determining whether the lending entity has funds sufficient to lend the loan amount.

6. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the information associated with the loan comprises at least one of a regional descriptor, a national descriptor, a metropolitan descriptor, a county descriptor and a geographic descriptor.

7. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the operation of determining whether a lending entity is eligible to fund the loan application comprises determining whether the lending entity is eligible to lend in the at least one of a regional descriptor, a national descriptor, a metropolitan descriptor, a county descriptor and a geographic descriptor.

8. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the operation of determining whether a lending entity is eligible to fund the loan application comprises determining whether the loan application meets at least one predetermined criteria of the lending entity.

9. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein prioritizing at least a portion of the eligible lending entities comprises determining whether a preferred lending entity exists for funding the loan application.

10. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the operation of prioritizing at least a portion of the eligible lending entities comprise sorting the eligible lending entities according to an amount of allocated funds that are available for lending.

11. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the operation of prioritizing at least a portion of the eligible lending entities comprises determining whether a local lending entity exists for funding the loan application.

12. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the operation of prioritizing at least a portion of the eligible lending entities comprises determining whether a lending entity is eligible to fund the loan application through an association of lending entities.

13. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the operation of prioritizing at least a portion of the eligible lending entities comprises grouping the eligible lending entities.

14. (Original) The method of claim 13, wherein the operation of grouping the eligible lending entities comprises grouping the eligible lending entities according to whether the lending entities are eligible to fund the loan application on their own or through an association of lending entities.

15. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising generating a list of at least one lending entity eligible to fund the loan application.

16. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising assigning the loan application to the selected eligible lending entity.

17. (Currently Amended) A system for allocating loans comprising:
at least one data storage device comprising:
information associated with a plurality of lending entities available for lending;
[[,]] and
an allocation engine comprising a processor, the processor adapted to:
determine whether each of the plurality of lending entities is eligible to
fund the loan application; [[,]]
prioritize at least a portion of the eligible lending entities according to at
least one predetermined rule; ~~and~~
determine whether any of the prioritized eligible lending entities is a
preferred lending entity;
determine, if none of the prioritized lending entities are preferred lending
entities, a ranking for the eligible lending entities; and
select an eligible lending entity from the prioritized eligible lending
entities, wherein the selected eligible lending entity is one of a preferred lending entity and a
lending entity with the highest ranking.

18. (Original) The system of claim 17, wherein the information associated with the loan application comprises a zip code.

19. (Original) The system of claim 18, wherein the processor is adapted to determine whether each of a plurality of lending entities is eligible to fund the loan application by determining whether the lending entity is eligible to fund a loan application associated with the zip code.

20. (Original) The system of claim 17, wherein the information associated with the loan application comprises a loan amount.

21. (Original) The system of claim 20, wherein the processor is adapted to determine whether each of a plurality of lending entities is eligible to fund the loan application by determining whether the lending entity has funds sufficient to lend the loan amount.

22. (Original) The system of claim 17, wherein the information associated with the loan comprises a location descriptor from at least one of: a zip code descriptor, a metropolitan descriptor, a county descriptor, a state descriptor, a regional descriptor, a national descriptor, and a geographic descriptor.

23. (Original) The system of claim 22, wherein the processor is adapted to determine whether each of a plurality of lending entities is eligible to fund the loan application by determining whether the lending entity is eligible to lend in a location corresponding to the location descriptor of the information associated with the loan application.

24. (Original) The system of claim 17, wherein:
the information associated with the plurality of lending entities comprises at least one predetermined criteria of a lending entity, and
the processor is adapted to determine whether each of a plurality of lending entities is eligible to fund the loan application by determining whether the loan application satisfies the at least one predetermined criteria of the lending entity.

25. (Original) The system of claim 17, wherein the processor is adapted to prioritize at least a portion of the eligible lending entities by determining whether one of the eligible lending entities comprises a preferred lending entity for the loan application.

26. (Currently amended) The system of claim 17, wherein:
the information associated with the plurality of lending entities comprises an amount of funds allocated for lending that are available; [[,]] and
the processor is adapted to prioritize at least a portion of the eligible lending entities by sorting the eligible lending entities according to the amount of allocated funds that are available for lending.

27. (Original) The system of claim 17, wherein the processor is adapted to prioritize at least a portion of the eligible lending entities by determining whether at least one of the eligible lending entities comprises a local lending entity for the loan application.

28. (Original) The system of claim 17, wherein the processor is adapted to prioritize at least a portion of the eligible lending entities by determining whether a lending entity is eligible to fund the loan application through an association of lending entities.

29. (Original) The system of claim 17, wherein the processor is adapted to prioritize at least a portion of the eligible lending entities by grouping the eligible lending entities.

30. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 29, wherein the processor is adapted to group the eligible [[of]] lending entities by grouping the eligible lending entities according to whether the lending entities are eligible to fund the loan application on their own or through an association of lending entities.

31. (Original) The system of claim 17, wherein the data storage device comprises a database.

32. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 17, wherein the processor is further adapted to generate a list of at least one lending entity eligible to fund the loan application. [[,]]

33. (Original) The system of claim 17, wherein the processor is further adapted to assign the loan application to the selected eligible lending entity.

34. (Original) The system of claim 33, wherein the processor is further adapted to notify the selected eligible lending entity.

35. (Original) The system of claim 17, wherein the information associated with a plurality of lending entities comprises eligibility criteria for at least one of the plurality of lending entities.

36. (Original) The system of claim 17, wherein the information associated with a plurality of lending entities comprises an amount of allocated funds for at least one of the plurality of lending entities.

37. (Original) The system of claim 17, wherein the information associated with a plurality of lending entities comprises a cap for at least one of the plurality of lending entities.

38. (Original) The system of claim 37, wherein the cap comprises a cap of funds allocated for an individual loan.

39. (Original) The system of claim 37, wherein the cap comprises a cap of funds allocated for a plurality of loans.

40. (Original) The system of claim 17, wherein the information associated with a plurality of lending entities comprises an affiliation of at least one of the plurality of lending entities.

41. (Original) The system of claim 17, wherein the information associated with a plurality of lending entities comprises information related to an association in which at least one of the plurality of lending entities participates.

42. (Original) The system of claim 17, wherein the loan application comprises an application for financing acquisition of an automobile.

43. (Original) The system of claim 17, wherein the information associated with the plurality of lending entities is stored on a plurality of networks associated with the plurality of lending entities.

44. (Original) The system of claim 17, wherein the information associated with the plurality of lending entities is stored on a network of a clearing house.

45. (Currently amended) A method for allocating automobile loans among a plurality of lending entities comprising:

receiving information associated with an automobile financing application;

determining whether each of a plurality of lending entities is eligible to fund the automobile financing application;

prioritizing at least a portion of the eligible lending entities according to at least one predetermined rule; [[and]]

determining whether any of the prioritized eligible lending entities is a preferred lending entity;

if none of the prioritized lending entities are preferred lending entities, determining a ranking for the eligible lending entities; and

selecting an eligible lending entity from the prioritized eligible lending entities, wherein the selected eligible lending entity is one of a preferred lending entity and a lending entity with the highest ranking.

46. (Original) The method of claim 45, wherein the information associated with the automobile financing application is received from an automobile dealership.

47. (Original) The method of claim 45, wherein the information associated with the automobile financing application is received by a clearing house.

48. (Original) The method of claim 45, further comprising generating a list of at least one lending entity eligible to fund the automobile financing application.

49. (Original) The method of claim 45, further comprising assigning the loan application to the selected eligible lending entity.

50. (Currently Amended) A system for allocating automobile loan applications among a plurality of lending entities comprising:

at least one data storage device comprising:

information associated with a plurality of lending entities available for providing automobile financing; [[,]] and

information associated with an automobile financing application; and

an allocation engine comprising a processor, the processor adapted to:

determine whether each of the plurality of lending entities is eligible to fund the automobile financing application; [[,]]

prioritize the list of eligible lending entities according to at least one predetermined rule; and

determine whether any of the prioritized eligible lending entities is a preferred lending entity;

determine, if none of the prioritized eligible lending entities are preferred lending entities, a ranking for the eligible lending entities; and

select an eligible lending entity from the prioritized eligible lending entities, wherein the selected eligible lending entity is one of a preferred lending entity and a lending entity with the highest ranking.

51. (Currently amended) A method for allocating loan applications among a plurality of lending entities comprising:

storing information associated with a plurality of lending entities, wherein the information associated with the plurality of lending entities comprises at least one eligibility criteria;

updating the information associated with the plurality of lending entities;

receiving information associated with a loan application; [[and]]

prioritizing at least a portion of the eligible lending entities according to at least one predetermined rule;

determining whether any of the prioritized eligible lending entities is a preferred lending entity;

if none of the prioritized eligible ending entities are preferred lending entities, determining a ranking for the eligible lending entities based at least in part on a second rule that is different from the first predetermined rule; and

determining a lending entity of the plurality of lending entities to assign the loan application based upon the at least one eligibility criteria and one of:

the preferred lending entity; and

the highest ranked entity; and

assigning the loan application to the lending entity.

52. (Original) The method of claim 51, wherein the information associated with the plurality of lending entities is stored on a centralized network.

53. (Original) The method of claim 51, wherein the information associated with the plurality of lending entities is stored on a centralized data storage device.

54. (Original) The method of claim 51, wherein the information associated with the plurality of lending entities is stored on a plurality of networks associated with the plurality of lending entities.

55. (Original) The method of claim 51, wherein the operation of updating the information associated with the plurality of lending entities is performed from a clearing house.

56. (Original) The method of claim 51, wherein the operation of updating the information associated with the plurality of lending entities is performed from a network associated with at least one of the plurality of lending entities.

57. (Original) The method of claim 51, wherein the operation of updating the information associated with the plurality of lending entities is performed by at least one of the plurality of lending entities.